

EXTINCTION OF SLAVERY.

A NATIONAL NECESSITY,

BEFORE THE PRESENT CONFLICT CAN BE ENDED.

No excuses are needed, I presume, if, in this day of darkness and uncertainty, a patriot and lover of his country feels and exhibits great anxiety concerning the principles and expectations prevalent in the present war; the management and method adopted, and the results which are to follow upon it. I confess that my anxiety in regard to the end of these things is great—it embraces all the great interests and hopes of the future of the nation,—and that, the more I examine the matter, compare facts and probabilities, and strive to comprehend the whole subject under the teachings of history, and according to those changeless principles which are the light of history, the greater my anxiety and fears become. For, in the past history of the world, how often, for the want of adequate wisdom, decision and principle, have the convulsions, the sufferings and conflicts of nations, which should have been but the birththroes of a day, the momentary evils of salutary change and progress, been protracted through centuries of abortive efforts—a hundred years of carnage and disaster and humiliation and suffering and despair, not accomplishing the actual progress which might and should have been made in one day of wise and resolute action. For a nation to fail in consummating a change or crisis in its life which all the necessities and hopes of its existence demand, is not to be freed from the inexorable necessity that is upon it, but only to protract all the evils and sufferings of such a crisis through tedious years of national misfortune and death. And is it certain beyond all rational fear that our present trials are but for a moment, and not the beginning of long years of chronic disorder, of temporizing folly, and of consequent troubles and conflicts? Let me ask, then, for once, a brief hearing concerning the prospect before us as a nation—the end, purpose, method, and final result of this terrible war in which the wickedness of traitors has involved us. Surely, if ever a clear foresight of the future were desirable, it is now—and equally so a clear perception of the principles and expectations by which our present efforts and duties should be determined and directed.

And here let me say that I have no doubts about the result which might be attained if the united powers and energies of the nation were wisely directed—my fears are only concerning what we shall

actually accomplish under the control of the principles, opinions and hopes which prevail. What is the future which they promise? There is no lack of men or of money, none of physical power or of intellectual energy; but it is not numbers or money, it is not rifles or bayonets, that conquer and achieve true victory—never! certainly not, that, by victory, can secure a true and enduring peace and maintain unity in the greatness and glory of the nation. It is the ruling, uniting, guiding thought in a nation that is its strength, the ruling thought and purpose is it that prevails and conquers and determines the result. The man who gives the nation a guiding and controlling idea, accepted and exhibited in believing action, is the true Leader and Captain, the Head of the national strength. The future is determined to-day more by the Thought of the Nation than by its Armies.

Nor does what I have to say imply any censure or distrust of the Government at Washington upon whom the conducting of the war devolves. In general its course has met my hearty approval. Its avowed position, its aims and principles declared upon calling the nation to arms, appeared to me wise and just, and surely the governing power of a nation should not be in haste to change. I have full confidence in the purposes and sound discretion of the Administration, and believe that, in due season, it will be found ready to adopt any more comprehensive policy which the opinions and expectations of the people generally will sustain. The point of reasonable fear and doubt is, whether there is likely to be clear insight enough in the nation—a clear recognition of true principles and their present demand upon us, and a clear foresight of the evil consequences inevitable upon their neglect or violation, to preserve us from a foolish temporizing with evil, and to lead the United Nation, Government and People, to demand with fearless faith the purging out of the deadly leaven which is filling the land with corruption, crime and shame; to demand the entire expulsion from the national body and domain of that remnant of old heathenism and legalized unrighteousness which is the cause of all our present calamities. It is, therefore, more especially to the Nation, to the People that I appeal, that they may meet the great demand of this day of trials wisely—that they may be sure to fully comprehend the present position and necessities of the nation, and wisely discern what we must think and what we must do, and what foundation we must lay in truth and right and national justice, if our high national expectations of a glorious future are to be fulfilled. I am not so anxious for immediate action as for immediate and adequate thought. I am not anxious at all for an immediate Proclamation of Emancipation from the President—not even by the enactment of Congress. It may not be best. The time may not have come for such direct action—indeed, the progress towards the desired and final result may be quite as rapid and sure by proclaiming emancipation only as rebel crimes or necessity compels, and when it can be practically realized and maintained. My fear is not from the present position of the Government and its method of the war, but for the future attempts at the adjustment of difficulties which may be made,

how, and according to what light and what principles, and by what popular impulses and beliefs, we shall at last attempt to establish a permanent peace and secure for ages to come our national existence in prosperity and glory.

There is indeed a wonderful unanimity among all parties and classes of northern men in support of the present war; and the firm resolve to maintain the Union is as great and as general as in any case could reasonably be expected. Nor will the people change this purpose, the only question is concerning the wisdom with which this purpose will be carried out. There is very little difference concerning the true object and spirit of the war. The number is very small who would make it primarily a war of emancipation: the provocation points in another direction. It is not the object of it even in the minds of those who think emancipation most necessary as well as just; they only demand that the union be preserved and the constitutional authority of Government be respected, that the present and future safety of the nation be secured. It is only concerning the means necessary to secure this end which all alike desire to see accomplished, that there is likely to be any essential difference of opinion.

But foresight and true wisdom for the future can come only from a clear and adequate comprehension of the present. To understand the present troubles and conflicts in their origin, to know the essential and productive cause, the evil seed of the harvest of evil, is to know how the same evils are to be avoided in time to come—and upon what false principles or erroneous action they are no less sure to follow a gain hereafter than is any harvest in kind upon the seed sown. If the people generally fail to comprehend aright the import, the origin, the productive principles of this present conflict, they cannot comprehend what is necessary to the future safety of the nation; they will miserably fail when it comes to the final question of a settlement of these troubles, and will only establish a delusive and transitory peace instead of laying a sure and wise foundation for the enduring peace and prosperity of the nation. A superficial view of the evil will lead to the trial of superficial remedies.

What then is the true import of this slaveholder's rebellion? How shall we understand it?

To regard it as in any sense accidental, and not as a legitimate and necessary consequence of antecedent errors—of the evil elements in our national existence, is a very superficial view of the matter, furnishing no guidance for the future. To regard it simply as the work of a conspiracy of evil and ambitious men is also a superficial view of it that reveals nothing of the principle and true origin of the conflict. It is the conflict of antagonistic principles, in the thought and feeling and life of the nation, that has rendered the conspiracy possible. It is this antagonism of principles that has formed, and given power and occasion to, the active movers, individually and in combination, of this wide-spread rebellion. The present conspirators and personal actors of treason are not the creators of the conflict; they are only the mediums through whom the discordant and evil element in the national existence works out into historic action and is manifested in

its natural results. If we would understand such national commotions, we must look beyond the phenomenal to the causative and essential; we must follow them back beyond the immediate actors to the principles in the national existence from which they originate.

This rebellion, then, we assert, was made, not in any late conspiracy, nor by D. S. or Y., but it was made when the heathen principle of slavery was admitted as an evil and antagonistic element, into our Government, which is essentially christian; (christianity in its political embodiment and outward form of established law,) and so a living and progressive one. The Formers of the Government did the fatal deed. They admitted the false and heathen principle, drawn from old heathen nations now dead, and which must forever conflict with the true life of the nation, forever bar its progress, and under which, unless conquered, expelled and purged away, the national life must inevitably perish. In old heathenism slavery had its appropriate place, its origin, its home, it was part and parcel of itself. It was in harmony with those heathen and despotic governments in the early ages of the world, in accord with the spirit and opinions of those nations to whom might was right, and liberty only an advantage in possession, a favor of fortune, and not a natural right of humanity. But with the principles and more generous faith of a christian civilization it could never harmonize. Its introduction into our political fabric was the beginning of the present discord. From that moment the deadly conflict sooner or later between christian and heathen elements, the gold and the clay in the same image, was necessitated. The body of death must be destroyed; its poison stayed and purged away, or the life and existence of the nation must inevitably perish under its power. From that moment when slavery was admitted to a legal standing under the shelter of the constitution, all true hopes of the perpetuity and increasing glory of the nation demanded that the issue be made and the element of old heathenism be subdued and cast out. From that moment it was fixed, that, if the nation could not cast it out, could not survive it, then must the nation be short-lived indeed and soon take its place by the side of heathen empires which perished long ago under the weight of their own essential wrongs and corruptions.

The history of a nation, even to its internal discords and conflicts, is determined by the elements or principles out of which and upon which it attempts to build up the fabric of its political existence. Constitutional maladies necessarily show themselves in serious disorders in due time. So, in the birth of our nation, the admission of slavery, (because already existing, or by implication and after assent as interpretation, even a negative or silent one, belieing positive professions), we say the admission of that remnant of old heathenism, into its constitutional life, the bare permission of such a great legalized wrong in a christian government, whose very life and perfect ideal is righteousness, made the present result inevitable from the first. The necessity was upon us to meet the evil power in conflict, and fight it out, even to the blood of kindred, if need be, if as a nation we would not supinely perish. The alternative from the first has been

to destroy or be destroyed. It has only been a question of time, a little earlier or later, when the conflict should fully open upon us; and of the degree and extent of the rebel hostility and power. Nor has the open conflict and test come any too soon. Nothing was to be gained by putting it off. Conservative delay, in attempts to avoid the danger, had only enlarged the evil and given strength and boldness to the spirit of rebellion. With this delay and hesitation to meet it, the spirit of heathen tyranny and domination, for where there are slaves there must be tyrants, claiming the place of command, and despising the attitude of obedience, rapidly increased in the boldness of its pretensions to rule or ruin the whole country. It took much to induce conservative and thoughtful men to meet the evil spirit abroad in the land as its character demanded. When abolitionism first began its attack upon slavery, and upon all who would not join the attack with it, prudent men generally opposed its ultra measures, and foresaw only evil consequences from the agitation of the subject; it was opening this very conflict; and it seemed scarcely safe to utter even the truth. And yet it is now plain that the agitation was begun none too soon, though only imprudent fanatics then dared to do it. Had it long been delayed the country would have been ruined beyond all retrieve. Providence, in determining to save, set aside human wisdom and found the instruments of opening the conflict in those narrow-sighted and visionary zealots who could do unhesitatingly what prudent and thoughtful men could not do or approve. So, too at the last election of President many of the most prudent and safe men in the country feared and deprecated the election of Mr. Lincoln as an anti-slavery candidate, they feared thus to oppose the arrogant demand of the Slavocracy, and shrunk from the conflict and perils which threatened to follow; they wished to go around the evil; they advised that the country turn aside from its direct course, lower its aims and declarations and compromise; and so by this sacrifice of its convictions and principles, preserve peace at least for the present. But now who can fail to see that matters were brought to a crisis none too soon, that a little longer delay and irresolution would have prostrated and enslaved the nation beyond all recovery. It was the election of Lincoln that saved us; and that too at the latest hour of hope when the evil power had almost overgrown the national strength. And how have the timid been since surprised and emboldened by the great and united uprising of the nation to fight the battle of constitutional liberty, a prophetic and sublime movement, more hopeful for the future than anything in our national history; a glorious assurance of the perpetuity of our national existence. And so, too, at this time, prudent and conservative minds shrink from the proclamation of general emancipation as the policy of the Government in the present war; they foresee many grave evils as the result. Yet the nation with an impulse which is more an instinct of safety and of right than a result of prudent reasoning, is advancing steadily and surely to the demand of this strong measure, as the legitimate remedy of present troubles and the only security of permanent peace. And when this, to the wise, apparently

rash act shall have been accomplished, we shall probably find by clear evidences following that it was our only safety, and that a longer delay of it, at the instigations of prudence foreseeing many evils, would have been at the greatest peril.

It is a superficial view, therefore, of the present national crisis which supposes that this conflict can end and leave things as it found them. This new page of history cannot be blotted out, nor severed from its own future consequences. It is also a short-sighted view which assumes, that, if we can go back to the old position, and restore our affairs and relations to their old standing, the safety and prosperity of the nation will be secured: it would be only to necessitate a repetition of present trials and dangers. The perilous stream would not then be crossed, it would be still before us, direct in the line of our national march, and not behind us as an obstacle surmounted. We must cross this flood that swells and foams or abandon the national hopes of a glorious future. The issue already made between oppression and liberty must be fought out to the end now, or re-fought hereafter, and perhaps under aggravated circumstances. Slavery re-established and the same consequences essentially would follow again. We might repeat the experiment a thousand times in succession with almost entirely the same results; the same or greater dissensions and animosities, the same production of lawless self-will, and of proud tyrannous and ungovernable pretension, and a like profusion and conspiracy of rebels and traitors, the same ambitious projects and a like wicked resort to arms. We should but repeat our history, and, from a wrong beginning, not corrected, come to the same disastrous conclusions; for they are not accidents, but have come by a necessitating law of nature which the Creator has established in his righteous government of the world.

If then our nation, as christian, is to have any such perpetuity and eternal prime as christianity promises the State which recognizes the imperishable principles of a true christian civilization, this false and heathen element must first be expelled. Till this purification be completed, we have, and can have, no assurance of permanence or of safety from present perils. They are involved in the very organism and vitiated vitality of the State. Our only hope is in this very remedial crisis now passing—that the nation now at last, before it is too late, may be "*Born Again*;" the same and not another, yet the Union "new-created in righteousness."

Nor will our safety then, by this one ordeal, be made absolute—for slavery is not the only or last vestige of heathen evils to be removed. The present is not our last national conflict—it is rather only preparatory to a greater. There are other heathen elements, false or wrong principles, in our political faith and organization, which are now comparatively quiescent because not seriously called in question or opposed, but which, when the time and occasion come, will assert their long established power, claim the right of perpetual dominion, gather their partisans, marshall their hosts like an army from old Egypt or Assyria, and compel the nation in self-defense to a conflict of extermination, perhaps even more terrific and bloody and of great-

er magnitude than the present. The necessity is upon us if, as a nation, we would live—we must pass these things and “endure to the end,” or passively submit to be destroyed—we must fight and conquer or sink into national decay. It is in war and bloody conflicts that the earth is to put off its old corruptions and wrongs, and be new-created in righteousness and truth. So we find the teachings of Christ and indeed of the christian writers and of the prophets generally, are full of intimations that “wars and rumors of wars” will immediately precede the advent of man’s highest social and civil condition—that, through great and fearful wars, the God-created, God-redeemed race of man must fight its way to its final estate of glory and peace. What a word was that from the Savior of the world, as yet to be proved fearfully true, “I am not come to send peace upon the earth but a sword.” To foresee these things in our own national history requires no spirit of prophecy, but only a clear insight into the great and changeless and ever active principles by which human affairs are governed.

Is it not a well authorized conclusion, therefore, that it is folly for us to hope to end this war in the restoration of all things to the same condition in which they were before it began?—the hope will only deceive us, and end in some act of folly to be long deplored; some attempt at establishing peace from which no permanent peace can come. There is really no possible hopeful end to this conflict but the end of slavery. There is no such easy escape from our national perils as some seem to imagine—no prospect of the war being short but by being useless, or else by being radical and determined and, I may add, in regard to false principles, most unsparing. To purpose therefore that the Union shall survive and its glory and power be triumphantly restored and perpetuated, is virtually to doom slavery to speedy extinction. The preservation of the Union and the destruction of slavery are inseparable; aye, identical now; and he who votes for the one necessarily votes for the other. Still as I have intimated, it may do no good now to proclaim general emancipation as the ultimate condition of peace; it might in many minds present a new and a false issue, and the reason for it might not be rightly understood; it might not aid in subduing the rebellion, which is the present work to be done. This accomplished, then will follow the careful determination of all the conditions of peace which the security, prosperity and future harmony of the nation demand. It is fitting perhaps that the policy of the national government should steadily represent the great purpose and object of the war, the great and sacred cause for which we have been obliged to appeal to arms, the preservation of the Union in its integrity under a government of constitutional law. But, for all this, and though the way for the return of the rebels to loyalty and duty is left wide open, still let not the People, no, nor the Government either, deceive themselves with the false expectation that the present breach of the Union can be healed so long as slavery remains. Just liberty and human rights under equal and righteous law cannot be thus united in harmony with legalized oppression and fundamental injustice and wrong.

Why then should not all hearty defenders of the Union be one? Indeed are we not one?---aye, surely, we are one in purpose and in every essential desire and hope. Let us not then pause in our great work, in which we are engaged, to contend about points of difference not involved in present duty. Let us resolve, one and all together, to uphold the constitutional authority and power of the national Government at all hazards. And well for us, if in this patriotic purpose, sinking all minor obstacles, prejudices, hopes or fears, we attain to a just and unbiased judgment and a true comprehension of this conflict---discerning the import of it under the light of a knowledge of the principles of God's just retributive Government over the nations of the earth. Well, if, in this clear and changeless light we give up entirely every false hope of attaining safety, prosperity, or even peace by another compromise with heathen slavery. Then indeed in the might of true principles, the nation will be so far safe and invincible; and the constitution and laws of the land will attain, in their received import and practical force, their true harmony with the everlasting liberty and righteousness of a christian civilization. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done *on earth*"---in the civil Government of the nation. If we see the truth clearly, may God give us the earnest honesty to do it---if not, may He make our blindness the instrument of accomplishing the purposes of his unerring wisdom.

I have not thought it necessary to show, that, under existing circumstances, we are released from all legal or moral obligation to longer tolerate slavery in the land, if the safety of the nation demands its extinction. The case is too plain for doubt. The absurdity and dishonesty are about equal in the attempt made by half-way traitors to still impose upon law-abiding citizens a constitutional obligation to preserve slavery in rebel states and shield traitors as though innocent from the consequences of their crimes. It would be no act of perfidy, no breach of covenant obligation, no violation of law or right, for the nation now to declare that henceforth slavery shall find no place or protection under its flag. Happily too such an outlawry of slavery and practical recognition of the natural freedom and equality of all men would require no alteration of our Constitution---unchanged it would still be appropriate, and simply need to be interpreted under the light and in harmony with the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and as honestly meaning what it says. The permission of slavery in the constitution---if such there be, as asserted and generally admitted---is only implied and nowhere expressly declared. That instrument seems to have been made in anticipation of a better and more just time to come. The Framers of it must have intended, that, when slavery should be done away, the Constitution should still remain; and that with this national progress and extermination of evil, the language of the Constitution should become even more appropriate, and this Highest Law of a nation where freedom and just and equal rights are the inheritance of every man, abide in its righteousness forever!